

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 1080

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SUBJECT: THE BIJEDIC VISIT

1. AS BIJEDIC COMES TO WASHINGTON HE LEAVES BEHIND A CONCERNED YUGOSLAVIA - CONCERNED NOT SO MUCH BY HER OWN PROBLEMS AS SUCH AS BY HOW OTHERS PERCEIVE THEM.

2. FOR YUGOSLAVIA REALLY ISN'T DOING BADLY. THE TURMOIL OF FOUR YEARS OF CHANGE IN POLITICAL CONCEPT CULMINATED A YEAR AGO IN A NEWLY RECENTRALIZED AND THUS STRENGTHENED PARTY, WITH BOTH GOVERNMENT AND PARTY STRUCTURES REVISED TO DEAL WITH TODAY'S REALITIES. THE DOOMSAYERS ONCE AGAIN HAVE COME CROPPERS AS INFLATION HAS NOT TURNED RAMPANT, AND ONE MILLION WORKERS HAVE NOT FLOODED BACK FROM THE WEST. REAL ECONOMIC GROWTH HAS IN FACT BEEN MAINTAINED.

3. BUT THE EXPECTATIONS OF SOME HAVE NOT BEEN MET, AND THEREIN LIES A PROBLEM. CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HAD IT THAT WITH THE POST-TITO STRUCTURE IN PLACE THE ATMOSPHERE WOULD RELAX ONCE AGAIN - BUT THIS HAS NOT HAPPENDD. THERE HAS BEEN A DECISION (PERHAPS UNDERSTANDABLE) TO KEEP THE DRIVE FOR DISCIPLINE ACTIVE. THUS, EIGHT DISSIDENT MARXIST PROFESSORS WHO WOULDN'T QUIT CARPING AT THE REGIME HAVE BEEN SENT ON FULL PAY TO DO RESEARCH OR TAKE FOREIGN LECTURE POSTS AND THEIR MAGAZINE HAS BEEN CUT OFF; PERENNIAL GADFLY MIHAJLO MIHAJLOV HAS BEEN SEVERELY DISCIPLINED AGAIN FOR PUBLISHING HIS ANTI-REGIME VIEWS IN THE FOREIGN PRESS.

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4. AND THAT FOREIGN PRESS HAS RESPONDED WITH A VENGEANCE. PERHAPS A LESS SENSITIVE YUGOSLAV LEADERSHIP - ONE WHICH WASN'T ANYWAY SITTING AROUND WAITING FOR THE END OF AN ERA - COULD BEAR THE BARBS WITH MORE EQUANIMITY. BUT THESE ARE FOLK WHO FEEL A BIT SET UPON BY OTHERS WHO ALSO ARE CONTEMPLATING THE END OF THAT ERA AND WHO - SOME YUGOSLAVS FEEL - ARE GANGING UP TO USE THE EVENT FOR THEIR OWN ENDS.

5. TO WIT, IN THE PAST YEAR THEY HAVE UNCOVERED AT LEAST TWO ORGANIZED EFFORTS TO DISSECT THE COUNTRY IN FAVOR OF CREATING A CROATIAN NATIONALIST STATE, AND AT LEAST TWO GROUPS PLOTTING TO TAKE THEM BACK TO THE DAYS OF THE COMINFORM AND SOVIET HEGEMONY. AND WHILE NONE OF THESE ON THEIR OWN MERITS SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, EACH HAS HAD (OR WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE HAD) LINKS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY TO THOSE WHO COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS. ENOUGH TO MAKE ANYONE A BIT PARANOID.

6. SO, THEY TEND TO SEE AN ENEMY AND A CONSPIRACY UNDER EVERY ROCK AND HEADLINE. AND WHILE SUCH THINGS ROLL OFF OF WESTERNERS ACCUSTOMED TO THE BARBS OF AN UNFETTERED PRESS, WHEN THE NEW YORK TIMES HEADS AN EDITORIAL "BELGRADE STALINISM", THE YUGOSLAVS HURT.

7. BIJEDIC COMES AT A PROPITIOUS TIME, A TIME WHEN THE YUGOSLAVS PARTICULARLY NEED A VISIBLE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FROM SOMEONE WHO COUNTS. CERTAINLY SOME USEFUL BUSINESS WILL BE CONDUCTED DURING THE VISIT - THERE COULD HARDLY NOT BE WITH THE STRENGTH OF THE YUGOSLAV GROUP. BUT A YUGOSLAV PRIME MINISTER STANDING BESIDE AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT IN AND OF ITSELF WILL PROVIDE THE KIND OF CONFIRMATION OF CONFIDENCE THAT THE YUGOSLAVS FEEL THEY NEED RIGHT NOW.

8. AND THAT, FOR THE YUGOSLAVS, IS WHAT THE BIJEDIC VISIT IS ALL ABOUT. THE PROGRAM WORKED OUT BY WASHINGTON IS TAILORED JUST RIGHT TO SATISFY THE YUGOSLAV PSYCHE. BUT I DO HOPE THAT BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEMONSTRATION OF US INTEREST AND CONFIDENCE THE VICE PRESIDENT WILL BE ABLE TO HOST A FUNCTION FOR BIJEDIC IF THE SECRETARY IS DETAINED IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IS UNABLE TO DO SO.

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